

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐
no ☐

Property Name: Bethesda Post Office Inventory Number: M:35-14-05
Address: 7400 Wisconsin Avenue City: Bethesda Zip Code: 20814
County: Montgomery USGS Topographic Map: Washington West
Owner: United States Post Office Is the property being evaluated a district? No yes
Tax Parcel Number: N458 Tax Map Number: HN22 Tax Account ID Number: 00490661
Project: Determination of Eligibility Agency: United States Post Office
Site visit by MHT Staff: X no yes Name: N/A Date: N/A
Is the property located within a historic district? Yes X no

If the property is within a district

District Inventory Number: _____

NR-listed district yes Eligible district Yes District Name: _____

Preparer's Recommendation: Contributing resource yes no Non-contributing but eligible in another context _____

If the property is not within a district (or the property is a district)

Preparer's Recommendation: Eligible yes X no

Criteria: X A B X C D Considerations: A B C D E F G None

Documentation on the property/district is presented in:

Description of Property and Eligibility Determination: *(Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map and photo)*

Description of the Property

The Bethesda Post Office is a small one-story building (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_01-02) with partially exposed basement located at the corner of Wisconsin and Montgomery Avenues in Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland. Designed in the Colonial Revival style, the original building consisted of a five-bay main block constructed in 1938. The rectangular main block featured a medium-pitched hipped, slate roof and a centrally placed polygonal steel cupola topped by an ornamental weathervane. The east (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_01 - 05), west (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_08 - 09) and south (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_06 - 07) elevations were clad in irregularly coursed, rough-faced native Maryland

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Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended X

Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G None

Comments: Lacks integrity under Criterion C

Andrew Apple
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services
Peter Elan
Reviewer, NR Program

1/7/2011

Date

1/10/11

Date

201100187

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stone. In 1966, a large addition was incorporated into the north elevation of the original main block. The 1966 addition starting at the primary, or east, elevation telescopes west beyond the rear, or west, façade, creating a loading dock. The 1966 addition is clad in a similar stone on the east, stucco on the north, and yellow brick on the west elevations (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_10 – 11).

The 1966 addition, and a later 1985-1986 renovation, significantly changed the building's exterior and interior configuration, and increased the square footage of the building by approximately 70 percent. The primary, or east, elevation is divided into two portions—the main block and the 1966 addition. The main block is characterized by four full-height Doric pilasters that separate the main central entry from two large wood sash windows (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_04). The smooth-faced stone pilasters support an entablature on which the words "United States Post Office, Bethesda, Maryland" are incised into the frieze. An eight-light transom crowns the entrance double doors are wood, each with three lights over a molded bottom panel. The two large wood windows flanking the entry consist of eight-over-twelve-light wood sash windows above recessed molded wood panels. Both windows and the entry are framed by fluted surrounds with corner blocks. The entrance is accessed by a single-stepped concrete stoop flanked by matching iron balustrades before which are matching, "colonial" style lamp posts. The current lamps do not match those depicted in period photos.

Flanking the central façade bay of the main block are single, segmental arched six-over-six-light, wood windows with stone lintels and sills (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_03-04). Stone voussoirs and keystones articulate the arch openings. Beneath the southern window is a smooth-finished stone plaque identifying the Secretary of the Treasury, Postmaster General, along with the building's architect and engineer and date of construction (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_05). A smooth stone water table projects out slightly from the façade wall plane.

As a result of the 1966 addition, the primary facade extends to the north along Wisconsin Avenue and is clad in a similar irregularly coursed rough-faced stone. This portion of the façade features a side entrance that contains a single three-light, wood door with side lights and an eight-light wood transom window. Both the window and door have fluted surrounds and corner blocks (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_03). The cornice entablature and water table continue across the face of the addition.

Entirely original to the main block, the south elevation, is also clad in irregularly coursed rough-faced stone. Within this elevation fronting Montgomery Avenue are eight windows and an exposed basement level, which is accessed by a flight of concrete steps and a concrete walk extending from the southwest

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corner of the building (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_06 - 07). The windows along the main floor are arched six-over-six light, wood windows with rusticated stone sills and lintels consisting of voussoirs and keystones. The stone water table course continues around from the façade and separates the first floor from the basement level.

Also part of the main block, the exposed basement level features five window openings, some of which remain as wood windows and others that now contain metal louvered vents. These six-over-six sash windows have stone sills and flat arches articulated with stone voussoirs. There are two doorways at the basement level--one metal double door and one single metal door. The original exterior double door is now within the basement interior being used on the janitor's storage closet. The basement portion of the south elevation is English in form. Decorative iron railing runs on top of a retaining wall that fronts the south elevation basement window area. Adjacent to the southeast corner is a driveway extending from Montgomery Avenue leading to a parking lot and the loading dock at the rear, or west elevation of the building.

Like the primary façade, the rear, or west, elevation is divided into two distinct sections--the main block and the 1966 addition, which includes a loading dock extending west (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_08-09). The west elevation that consists of the main block is clad in irregularly coursed rough-faced stone. The main block and stone section maintains four arched windows identical to the ones found on the façade and north elevations, along with a square attached chimney stack also faced with stone. The smooth stone entablature, cornice and water table continue around the west elevation. Extending to the north of the west elevation is the 1966 addition clad in yellow brick. Part of the 1966 addition, the loading dock extends west from the northwest corner of the building to form a rear ell. The portion of the 1966 addition that is flush with the main block contains a rear entrance with a double metal door. This entrance is central to the covered loading dock which runs along the south elevation of the ell. The ell consists of a loading dock and exposed basement with vehicle entrances. The entire extension is clad in yellow brick and is distinctly streamline with no major architectural ornamentation.

The north elevation of the building is a blind wall that relates entirely to the 1966 Addition with stucco cladding along the portion related to the Main Block and brick throughout the rear ell (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_10-11). The north elevation abuts the adjacent lot and entrances to underground parking facilities. Located on the corner of an extremely congested intersection, the grounds of the building are limited to the brick sidewalk and simple flower beds and tree spaces within the walks. The building is shaded at the

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west and south elevations by trees that partially mask the building. Within the sidewalk between the south elevation and Montgomery Avenue is a small modern metal-clad structure that contains an elevator to provide access to the Washington Metro. At the northeast corner of the building, is a historical piece of public art (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_11). The Madonna of the Trail, a roughly 12 foot tall brownstone statue of a female pioneer with two of her children is set within a small alcove adjacent to the sidewalk. The base of the statue reads, "N-S-D-A-R Memorial of the Pioneer Mothers of the Covered Wagon Days." The statue is not owned by the United States Postal Service and is not part of the property. The interior of the building contains public retail/post office box and postal workspace. The public retail space and the postal workspace are clearly divided on the main level, while the basement level is for employees only. Within the public portion of the post office, and along the primary, east elevation of the building's interior is the rectangular shaped retail lobby (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_14-15). Access to the retail lobby is only gained through the extension entrance, the single door at the northeast corner of the building—the original double door entrance is no longer in use. The extension entrance also leads to a rectangular shaped room that contains private post office boxes that are laid-out in a graduated pyramidal shape with the ceiling decreasing in height in conjunction with the walls narrowing in three tiers toward the far end of the room (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_12-13). This room maintains two interior doors, one to the retail, service lobby and one to the employee-only section of the building. The post office box room is separated from the retail, service lobby by a contemporary glazed partition set in metal framing with a brass finish.

Occupying the entire portion of the main block's primary elevation, the lobby is separated from the postal workspace along the west wall of the room by a contemporary "parcel-slide" counter with individual computer desk terminals for retail post office workers. The counter and desks are constructed of metal and particle board portions that are covered with faux wood Formica.

Above this space, but within the lobby portion of the room is a large framed oil painting, which depicts an historical view of a rural scene and farmer's market. In the bottom center of the picture is a plaque:

"Robert Gates – Artist, This Mural Was Preserved For the Citizens of Bethesda Through The Efforts Of The Montgomery Farm Women's Cooperative Market, Inc. 1967" (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_16). The decoration and details of the lobby are relatively simple. There is standard wood trim indicative of door, window, and general room treatment of government buildings in the 1930s. The entrance retains original

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interior shutters. There are portions of marble wainscoting that appear original, but this is not continuous or consistent throughout the interior. The original terrazzo floor remains.

Behind the service counter is a wall with three pass-through openings and a door at each end leading to postal workspace. A door in this area provides access to the "Lookout Gallery," which was a device throughout the building that allowed managerial staff to view postal workers from various vantage points at both the main and basement levels. Small windows exist throughout the building in rooms and hallways and are generally located at the top of the wall near the ceiling.

Extending from a large workroom are several features--a large walk-in safe, offices for the postmaster and other employees, workspace for filling post office boxes, a vestibule to the rear loading dock, a restroom, and an open stair leading to the basement (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_17-19). The workspace features both original and contemporary features. Original features include inconsistently placed bead board wainscoting, some doors, the safe, other postal safes in the center of the room and the protective metal balustrade running along the open stair.

The basement consists of hallways, a break-room, restrooms, offices, work/storage space, janitorial closets, a large open area for vehicles, and utility rooms and closets. This portion of the building is highly utilitarian with scattered original features. The space is dominated by contemporary renovations and updates (M: 35-14-5_2010-11-01_20-21).

History of the Property and Related Historic Contexts

Historic Context: Bethesda, Maryland

Within the Washington DC Metropolitan area, Bethesda is situated in Montgomery County, Maryland along one of the older thoroughfares in the region—known today as Wisconsin Avenue, which was originally an ancient Native American trail. The foundation of Bethesda as a viable community is rooted in this particular thoroughfare. Developed as a toll road between 1805 and 1820, the Washington and Rockville Turnpike, which became an important route between the shipping port of Georgetown and Rockville. The earliest establishments in what is now Bethesda were a store and tollhouse located along the turnpike. By 1862, the community was known as "Darcy's Store," deriving from the original store owner, William E. Darcy. Also during this early period of settlement was the establishment of the Bethesda Meeting House, a Presbyterian church built in 1820, which was at the present site of the Cemetery of the current meeting house. In 1871, the new postmaster, Robert Franck, instigated the

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Throughout the 19th and very early 20th centuries, Bethesda remained a small town, consisting of a post office, blacksmith shop, church, school and a few commercial and residential buildings. With the establishment of street car companies in Washington came the development of suburbs, not only in the second and third alphabets of the District of Columbia's NW quadrant, but also within the small Maryland towns of Montgomery County. This directly led to the suburbanization of Bethesda in the 1920s through the mid century. Residential subdivisions began to appear on old farmland, becoming the neighborhoods of Drummond, Woodmont, Edgemoor, and Battery Park—among others (Bethesda 1990).

Following the stock market crash of 1929 and Depression of the 1930s, the New Deal established the Works Progress Administration and the Public Works Administration. Bethesda buildings constructed under these programs included the Bethesda Post Office (1938) and Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School (1935). As development continued so did the expansion of the federal infrastructure formerly confined to the District of Columbia. Because of space and political reasons, certain agencies developed new facilities in what was becoming the Maryland suburbs of the Federal City. Both the National Naval Medical Center (1940) and the NIH complex (1948) were built just north of Bethesda's developing downtown (Short 1939). These Federal facilities called for medical professionals and other personnel along with the additional commercial and residential infrastructure needed to support this growing community.

Since the first half of the 20th century Bethesda's small town built environment has virtually disappeared making way for the high rises and modern buildings that define Bethesda today. This growth was augmented by development of the state highway that would become I-270 in the 1950s and 1960s, the expansion of Metro-rail with a station in Bethesda in 1984 and numerous other developments in Federal and private business ventures in the area (Bethesda 1990).

Historic Context: New Deal Architecture of the WPA and the PWA

In an effort to aid the devastated American population during the Great Depression that occurred after the great crash of Wall Street in March of 1929, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), established a series of economic programs to provide relief, recovery and reform in the United States known as the New Deal. The "First New Deal" was established in 1933 and the "Second New Deal" between 1934 and 1936. This was a complex series of economic programs, which included establishing the agencies of the Public Works Administration (1933) and the Works Progress Administration (1935) both of which dealt with

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improving the American infrastructure through public works projects. These projects included the construction of local post offices and schools (Short 1939).

The PWA was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933 and concentrated on the construction of large-scale public works such as the construction of dams, bridges and buildings for public institutions. Buildings constructed by the PWA most likely originated in one of two periods of the agency's major funding eras--1933-35 and in 1938. The PWA was discontinued in 1939 (Short 1939).

The PWA, reorganized as the Works Projects Administration in 1939, was the most substantial New Deal agency created by the U.S. Congress upon passage of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 on April 8, 1935. The WPA employed millions of Americans in order to complete enumerable public works projects. Expenditures from 1936 to 1939 totaled nearly \$7 billion. By 1943, the total amount spent was over \$11 billion. Part of these expenditures included the construction of public buildings such as post offices and schools.

Hard at work throughout the 1930s, programs of the New Deal, specifically both the PWA and the WPA, left the Federal mark on Bethesda and the greater Montgomery County area. During the 1930s, Bethesda saw at least three Federal construction projects including Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School completed in 1935, the Bethesda Post Office completed in 1938, and the National Naval Medical Hospital in 1942 (Short 1939). In the greater area of Montgomery County two other post office buildings were constructed--Silver Spring and Rockville both of which were completed in 1937. Other New Deal era buildings in Montgomery County included Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, completed in 1935. Nearby, in other Maryland communities Federal research facilities were constructed in Beltsville--the Laboratory and Office Building, completed in 1935, the Horticulture Library and Research Building, completed in 1936, and the Animal Husbandry and Nutrition Research Laboratory, completed in 1937. A new post office was also constructed in Easton, Maryland, out on the Eastern Shore. Washington DC saw the most impressive amount of construction in the area with the erection of monumental buildings such as the Post Office Department Headquarters completed in 1934, the Department of the Interior Building and Indian Arts and Crafts Shop and the Federal Trade Commission Building both of which were completed in 1938. Even the main building at Howard University, completed in 1938, and the 1936 restoration of the Pierce Mill in Rock Creek Park were important local civil works projects of the New Deal (Short 1939).

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Most of the buildings referenced above were completed in the Colonial Revival style. While some of those mentioned were Art Deco, Art Moderne, or Neoclassical, both high schools mentioned and the main building at Howard were high style Colonial Revival in both the interior and exterior treatments. The exteriors of the buildings in Beltsville and especially the Bethesda Post Office were highly stylized Colonial Revival designs. Many other period examples such as the United States Post Office at Easton were more normative examples of Colonial Revival.

Historic Context: The U.S. Post Office

Postal service in America or the flow of the "U.S. Mails" began in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where it was established in 1775 by Benjamin Franklin and a decree of the Second Continental Congress. Created from Franklin's operations, the Post Office Department was officially established in 1792 as part of the United States Cabinet (Fuller 1972). After almost 200 years, the Post Office Department became the United States Postal Service in 1983 when the Postal Reorganization Act removed the agency from the cabinet to an independent status.

Historic Context: Postal Service in Bethesda, Maryland

In 1862, local merchant, William E. Darcy, of Darcy's Station, was appointed postmaster for the area that now encompasses modern Bethesda. The small town post office operations were ran out of Darcy's store, which was typical of such settlements in that period. Darcy's tenure was short as a new postmaster was named in 1864 only to change again in 1871. The independent office was in operation until May 25, 1925 when, after a long succession of postmasters, the local service was reorganized as a branch of the Washington, D.C. Post Office, which it remained until reorganization again occurred in 1981 and Bethesda resumed its status as an independent office (Skerrett 1990).

Historic Context: Standardized Building Type, Form and Style in Bethesda, Maryland

While the standardization of Federal buildings and structures certainly predates the 1930s, architecture of the New Deal certainly created a much broader pallet of architectural specimens formulating a multitude of architectural plans related to a uniform type, form, and style. The specific aesthetic treatment and style of Bethesda's post office building constructed in 1938 seems unique to Maryland, but not in a greater

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national context (USPS 2002). However, even if a building appeared almost identical on the exterior, the interior would vary depending on the specific postal operations. For example, there may have been a standardized general plan for the exterior aesthetic treatment with a mixture of standardized spatial elements in the interior such as the size and treatment of the postmaster's office or the layout of the basement.

A specific enumeration for the standardized design of the building in Bethesda is unknown, but it is probable that it would have been specified as a Type CC25 1600, which is a label given to an almost identical post office in Oregon, Illinois. Faithful to the Colonial Revival style, Bethesda's building plan consists of a five bay main block with a central dominant bay consisting of main entry door flanked by two large sash windows. Full length Doric pilasters flank the door and the bay, above which "United States Post Office" and the town's name was usually incised in the smooth faced wide stone entablature. The entrance double doors were wood and usually each contained a stack of 3 glazed panes over a molded bottom panel. Large transom light above the door consists of two rows of 4 lights. Large wood windows flanked the door consisting of eight-over-twelve-light wood sash windows above recessed molded wood spandrels. Both windows and the door opening were framed by fluted surrounds with corner blocks. The entrance was accessed by concrete stoops flanked by matching iron balustrades fronted by matching, "colonial" style lamp posts. The rectangular main block features a medium-pitched hipped, slate roof and a centrally placed polygonal steel cupola with leaded glass topped by an ornamental weathervane. The building type was usually clad in brick, but at least two specimens were finished in stone native to the region of construction. These post office buildings always included a rear ell type loading dock also finished in the continuous cladding. Typically these buildings have a similar interior layout with the postmaster's office and lobby with lock boxes along the façade interior. The mural was almost always located above the door to the postmaster's office. Postal workspace was behind the retail counter on the first floor and throughout the entire basement (Athens 2010, U.S. Treasury 1937).

With few known differences, this type was used in Auburn, Washington; Ayer, Massachusetts; Boston Massachusetts' Chestnut Hills Branch; Kings Mountain, North Carolina; New Haven, Connecticut; Oregon, Illinois; Toms River, New Jersey; Whitinsville, Massachusetts; and Williamstown, North Carolina. Each of these buildings was constructed in the 1930s or very early 1940s. At least five of these buildings are extant and in use as post office facilities. Unlike the long list of buildings clad in brick, Bethesda's building was clad in stone native to the region of construction. Only one other example of this

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type with this particular cladding is known to have been constructed—in Athens, Pennsylvania (USPS 1972). Not only does this building still exist, it retains a high degree of integrity including its original, continuous stone façade, interior layout, and loading dock, among other integral features (Athens 2010).

History of the Property/Historic Context: The Bethesda Post Office (1938)

As part of the New Deal, James A. Farley (1888-1976), Postmaster General from 1933 to 1940, approved the construction of new post office buildings and the acquisition of artwork for these buildings. Under the Act of June 19, 1934, the Treasury Department launched a new public-building program that involved 361 projects at a cost of \$65 million. This included the execution of public murals for these public spaces, which was a program that would employ artists through the WPA (Fuller 1972).

On Thursday, September 16, 1937, *The Montgomery Independent* reported the following:

Funds were set aside by Federal officials some time ago after a committee from the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce inaugurated a campaign for the building and obtained support of Rep. David J. Lewis.

This article, "Work On Post Office Nears," post dated acquisition of the property, which was one of the initial steps in officially starting the project in 1936. Yet the project's origins date back to 1935 when a committee of the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce was formed to influence their local Representative David J. Lewis to persuade congress to allow the community to procure Federal funding allocated for the construction of new post office buildings. This campaign proved successful. On June 22, 1936, the Farley's office and the Treasury Department allotted \$115,000 for the project, which would include acquisition of a site, construction of the building, and purchase of the necessary equipment (*Montgomery Independent*, September 1937).

After an intensive survey of available locations, the current lot at 7400 Wisconsin Avenue was purchased by way of the Security Land Company of Maryland on September 25, 1937 for \$45,000. Since the lot had been selected in December 1936, plans were underway between that time and September 1937. During this period architectural and engineering plans were developed by the Public Buildings Service (PBS).

At this point in time, PBS operated under the general authority of the Treasury Department's Procurement Division. Building and construction efforts of the Federal government had a long chain of authority to credit on architectural plans and cornerstones: Louis A. Simon was the Supervising Architect; Neal A.

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Melick the Supervising Engineer; W.G. Noll Superintendent of Architecture; N.S. Thompson Superintendant of Mechanical Engineering, and T.C. Brooks the Superintendent of Structural Engineering. Yet it was the unknown W.J. Wright who actually drew the plans, which were approved in April and May of 1937 (U.S. Treasury Department 1937).

An additional \$4,500 was allocated for the project on August 25, 1937. The long line of approvals continued through September when the previously mentioned article in *The Montgomery Independent* reported:

\$54,112 Bid Submitted On Building

Estimated 270 Days Needed To Complete New Structure (Montgomery Independent September 1937)

Just a few weeks after the article was published, a contract was awarded on September 23, 1937 to the Safari Brothers Inc. of Jamaica, New York for the lowest bid--\$54,112. Construction began in October 1937 and in 1938 the committee for the dedication of the new Bethesda Post Office was formed with Jo. V. Morgan as the General Chairman. The building was completed in May 1938 and the dedication ceremony was held on May 27, 1938 (MCHS 2010). The program that day included the Massing of Colors by the Bethesda School Children, an Invocation and Benediction, an Address of Welcome, the Laying of the Cornerstone by the Bethesda Lodge No. 204 F.A.A.M., musical performances by the Newcomb Bethesda Community Singers and four addresses including words from Vincent L. Burke, Bethesda's Postmaster at the time. There were over 1,000 people in attendance and local students were released from school early to permit attendance at the ceremony. The post office opened its doors for official business on June 1, 1938 at 8:00 AM (Montgomery Independent 21 July 1939).

The building was completed as a detached entity with irregular coursed rough-faced native Maryland stone cladding each elevation. Designed in the Colonial Revival style, the building's primary facade emulated the symmetry typical of Federal and Georgian buildings of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in America. The five-ranked edifice featured a central double door flanked by large eight-over-twelve wood windows—the apertures of this central entrance were separated and highlighted by four smooth-finished stone pilasters. Six-over-six arched wood windows flanked the central entrance fenestration, creating a perfectly symmetrical façade (U.S. Treasury 1938). Like most post offices in small town America in the 1920s and 1930s, this building had a presence in the streetscape as a fully articulated, detached building. A metal and glass cupola and decorative weathervane towered above at

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the center of the slate hipped roof, augmenting the building's feeling of importance. The stone façade even continued throughout the rear ell at the rear, north east corner of the building to form a loading dock—Colonial Revival style.

Created by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, a Federal document describing the "Competition For The Mural Decoration In The Bethesda, Maryland Post Office," the following was said of the lobby:

The public lobby has a wainscot of Tennessee coral rose with light Cardiff green marble base.

The walls are plaster painted a light cream color and ceiling a lighter shade. The terrazzo floor is dark green. The mural is to be 13 feet wide by 5 feet high and is to be situated over the

Postmaster's door (U.S. Treasury Department 1938).

The small lobby was finished in plywood paneling with marble wainscoting and terrazzo floors, a small alcove for post office boxes and a wood "post office screen" with three retail apertures were decorated with marble countertops and brass retail grills (U.S. Treasury 1937). Postal workspace including a postmaster's office, a safe, and other utilitarian space was located in the rear of the public lobby taking up two-thirds of the main floor for execution of mail sorting and etc. Further workspace occupied the entire basement along with utility features of the building.

The mural came shortly after the completion of the building. A competition was opened to all American artists who were residents of Maryland, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Determinations were made by a committee of two or more painters of the Section of Painting and Sculpture—then located at 7th and D Streets, SW, Room 415. The deadline was November 30, 1938. Artists were to submit one mounted design without glass in full color—3 inches to the foot in scale with the actual proposed work. Signatures on the face of the mural proposal were not permitted (U.S. Treasury 1938).

On December 18, 1938, the *Washington Herald-Times* reported, "Gates Commissioned To Execute Murals In Bethesda Office (Poe 1938)." Native to Detroit, Michigan, Robert Franklin Gates (1906-1982) studied at the Detroit School of Arts and Crafts, the Art Students League of New York, and the Phillips Gallery Art School in Washington, D.C. During the Great Depression he was hired by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture. Represented primarily by the Jefferson Place Gallery formerly of Washington, D.C., Gates painted primarily in the Federal City, teaching both at the Phillips Gallery from 1938 to 1942 and at American University from 1943 until his retirement. A mural of the Bethesda Farmers Market, "Montgomery County Women's Farmers Market," painted by Gates was

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commissioned for the Bethesda Post Office building at an expense of \$1,000 (Poe 1938). Payment of the \$1,000 was remitted to the artist in three installments: \$300 upon selection of the design; \$300 once the full size "cartoon" is completed and approved;" and \$400 once the work was completed. The Director of Procurement gave the final approval (U.S. Treasury 1938). Completing Bethesda's mural in 1939, Gates also painted "Buckwheat Harvest," a mural for the post office in Oakland, Maryland (Park 1984). Most probably commissioned by the Treasury Department, two formal photographs were taken to honor the mural. The first is an image of Robert Gates seated and displaying the competition design for the mural. This image was perhaps captured at the time he won the competition or even after the mural was completed, as he was awarded a reduced size copy of the mural (Gates Papers). The other photograph depicts the interior of the post office lobby after the mural was installed. Looking south the photographer, Lewis P. Woltz, captured the wall of the postmaster's office, showing a colonial revival interior characterized by the mural along the top of the wall, a central door with "superintendent" painted on the wood, a counter to the left for customer use, and two bulletin boards flanking central door. A reflection of the wood venetian blinds is seen in the bulletin board to the left. Woltz was located at 1323 F Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. (Woltz 1938).

By the 1960s Bethesda had outgrown the quaint Colonial Revival post office. On July 25, 1964, the *Washington Post* reported, "Bethesda Post Office to be Modernized":

Senator Daniel B. Brewster and Representative Carlton Sickles announced that the Post Office Department has obligated \$98,000 to extend and modernize the Federal building housing the Bethesda Post Office. Brewster said the additional improvements will provide eight service windows and new counter line equipment. He said an inspection earlier revealed outdated lock boxes and customer service areas and inadequate platforms and lobby space (Washington Post 1964).

This references plans that were executed by Burket, Tilghman, Nelson Associates of Silver Spring, Maryland. However, in 1965, the post office remained unaltered as is seen in a photograph taken in that year (Montgomery 2010). This photograph shows the State Theatre detached but immediately adjacent to the post office on the north, also fronting Wisconsin Avenue, indicating that by 1965 the post office had not yet been expanded.

On May 3, 1965, the *Washington Post* reported, "Expansion Set for Post Office":

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A construction contract for the expansion and modernization of the Bethesda Post office probably will be awarded this fall, according to Senator Daniel B. Brewster and Representative Carlton Sickles. The project is expected to cost \$98,000. The General Services Administration will call for bids after the design is approved (*Washington Post* 1965).

And in September 1966 construction of the extension had begun as the mural was "peeled" off the wall, an event also reported on in the *Washington Post*. A local activist asked that the mural be given to the farmers market for display and protection, but the Post Office Department declared that all salvage items were to be property of the contractor, as per their contract. The activist did not relent and in September 1966 the mural was removed to the market across Wisconsin Avenue (*Washington Post* 1966).

The 1966 addition was incorporated into the main block at the north elevation, which led to the demolition of the entire stone wall, including the nine original windows, and the original loading dock. The façade of the east elevation was extended north along Wisconsin Avenue in a stone matched to the original, and featured a single-door entrance through a new, secondary lobby space for post office boxes. Telescoping west as part of the 1966 addition, a nondescript loading dock replaced the original stone version. The rear of the loading dock was finished in yellow brick and the remainder of the north elevation in stucco. The original lobby was remodeled to include eight retail windows, including a new post office screen, and the main floor workspace was improved to include updated amenities. The rear ell included an underground garage at the basement level underneath both the loading dock and the part of the extension connected to the main block (*Washington Post* 1966, SWV 1983, SWV 1986, SWV 1987). In 1983, the recently reorganized United States Postal Service made plans to renovate the building so that it would again be up-to-date with all of the modern amenities called for in a post office facility of the 1980s. This included a reconfiguration of the public rooms to modern postal standards and appearances. Local citizens asked that mural be restored. Blueprints were drawn up by the SWV Partnership, Architects and Engineers of Severna Park, Maryland. The same plans were proposed again in 1986 and the project finally got underway in 1987—SWV prevailed as the contracting architects and engineers. The lobby was reconfigured both spatially and aesthetically with modern retail counters and the most up-to-date version of the lock box layout. The workspace also underwent alterations including the refinishing of offices and other interior rooms. Restoration of extant historical features occurred, including work on the exterior stone and cupola and refinishing of the wood doors and windows. A significant amount of new flooring

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and wall surfaces were incorporated into the building at this time, although some of the marble wainscoting and the terrazzo floors were left extant in the lobby (SWV 1986, SWV 1987).

Assessment of the Property

Historic Designation Status

The Bethesda Post Office is not currently individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), nor does it contribute to a listed NRHP historic district. The building (Site Number: M:35-14-05) is listed in the Maryland Inventory of Historic Sites, which is the survey maintained by the Maryland Historical Trust. The building (ID: 35/014-005A) has also been designated in the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* and the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

NRHP Evaluation

In order to be eligible for listing in the NRHP, a property must meet one or more of the four NRHP Criteria for Evaluation and retain its integrity, which is defined as the ability of a property to convey its significance. The following discussion provides an evaluation of the Bethesda Post Office both as an individual resource and as a potential contributing resource in a historic district.

The Bethesda Post Office was constructed between 1937 and 1938 as a modest but architecturally distinctive example of Colonial Revival architecture, as expressed by the symmetry of the façade, the pronounced entry bay, and the neoclassical architectural elements. Each elevation clad entirely in native Maryland irregularly coursed, rough-faced stone, the building also featured smooth-finished stone pilasters, a slate hipped roof over the front half of the building, a flat roof over the rear part of the building, and a metal-and-glass cupola and a decorative weathervane, all distinctly Colonial Revival—a style deemed appropriate for American Federal architecture and commonly used by the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect. As was the case in many post offices constructed under the New Deal, the building was designed to house a mural executed by an artist employed by the WPA. The subject matter of the mural was naturally related to the town's cultural heritage—the market.

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Completed in 1938, the original building had a small, but detailed lobby with a wood screen featuring three apertures finished with protective brass retail grills, glass screens and marble counter tops at which each was suited with three separate mail slots for "Out of Town Letters," "City Letters," and "Papers/Parcels". There was also a small alcove for lock boxes meant for the private receipt of the "U.S. Mails". The building included a rear ell consisting of an open-air loading dock also clad in the same irregular coursed rough-faced stone with three single-sash, multi-light windows along the north elevation. The mural was completed by early 1939.

In 1966, the building was updated to suit "modern" needs and the growing operations in Bethesda. This included the north addition of the building, which entailed an extension of the stone façade along Wisconsin Avenue, adding a new single door entrance to the primary, east elevation. The 1966 addition resulted in the demolition of the original north wall, eliminating nine original windows. The 1966 addition included additional workspace at the basement level; the incorporation of a multi-vehicle underground parking facility; demolition of the original irregular coursed rough-faced stone loading dock rear ell to provide additional driveway/parking lot access to a new, larger brick-clad rear ell telescoping off of the north addition. The 1966 addition also provided a basement-level entrance to the new parking facility. The 1966 addition extended the building to the north providing at least 70 percent more space. Other interior renovations occurred in 1966—reconfiguration of the workspace on the main floor; partial reconfiguration of the workspace at the basement level; and a complete reconfiguration and remodeling of the lobby's spatial layout and post office screen, which was replaced to suit eight retail apertures. This interior reconfiguration also included relocation of the postmaster's office in the southeast corner of the building to the southwest corner in place of the swing room (break room). The mural was located along the top of the wall at the south of the original lobby above the door to the postmaster's office. In preparation for the updates, the mural was removed from the lobby wall.

In 1987 the Bethesda Post Office was again "modernized"; however, this included some restoration of some of the remaining original features. The project included the reconfiguration and enlargement of the lobby; reconfiguration of the box lobby, reducing the workspace area to make room for a new layout of the lock boxes; reconfiguration of the workspace to make room for more offices; and restoration of selected original features in the lobby, such as wood doors and windows. It was at this time that the mural was brought back to the facility, cleaned, conserved and framed to hang over the new retail booths in the

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reconfigured lobby. The evolution of the building and the priorities of the USPS compromised the artwork's historic association with WPA Depression-era post offices murals found throughout the country, as this genre of American art is primarily inclusive of wall mural medium – not framed paintings.

Evaluation Under Criterion A: The building is among several New Deal-era buildings constructed for public use in Bethesda. While the scale was smaller than the Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School and the National Naval Medical Center, the building was in the heart of the community and was used by the general public at large. Its lobby was a place that almost every citizen entered at one time or another in order to sign for a package or mail a letter. It represents the Federal government presence at the local level, and the New Deal-era public works program, and as such was evaluated for local significance as a representative of historic trends and broad patterns of our history. While the Bethesda Post Office is associated with projects executed under the New Deal Administration, other more significant projects, such as the National Naval Medical Center and the National Institute of Health, buildings that still stand today, represent the Federal presence in Bethesda and also represent Bethesda outside of the context of its community. Therefore, as projects that sprung from New Deal roots, these larger projects constitute a much higher level of significance than the post office building, as this was a typical New Deal project/building of enumerable communities across the country. In fact, within the context of New Deal-era post offices of small Washington, D.C. suburban communities, both the Rockville Post Office (1937) and Silver Spring Post Office (1936-37) are specimens of parallel significance represented through buildings that retain a higher degree of exterior integrity than is present in the Bethesda building. This is important to note as National Register Bulletin 13 recommends that consideration of locally eligible post office buildings include a comparison of other local post offices within an urban or county-wide context. Furthermore, it is also important to consider that PWA alone completed at least 34,000 construction projects during the New Deal Era—approximately 406 of which were post office buildings. This is not including projects of the WPA and others of the New Deal Administration. However, unlike other communities across the nation, Bethesda is located in a semi-Federal context and did not and does not relate to the post office as a primary Federal and/or New Deal presence when much larger, more substantial agencies of Bethesda represent both Federal and New Deal through more pivotal architecture within extant built environment.

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While the building represents the postal service operations, it is not a significant example. For example, in Silver Spring's new post office, built at the same time, America's first mechanical mail sorting device was installed. The Bethesda Post Office is not known to represent a unique development in postal history.

Evaluation Under Criterion B: The Bethesda Post Office is not closely associated with the lives of persons significant in our past. Therefore, the Bethesda Post Office is not eligible under Criterion B for listing in the NRHP.

Evaluation Under Criterion C: The Bethesda Post Office is a local representative of the Colonial Revival style, constructed with funds provided by the New Deal, and as a work of the Office of the Treasury Department Supervising Architect during the 1930s. While the building was small scale, it was designed for a growing town. With a five-bay, symmetrical façade, smooth-finished stone pilasters, irregular coursed rough-faced native Maryland stone, hipped roof, and central cupola and weathervane on the exterior, and quaint lobby and wood screen, small scale lock box configuration, and placement of the mural painted specifically to depict the small town heritage of a new suburb on the interior, the Bethesda Post Office was a step above other post offices of this size built in Maryland. Most small town post offices were of brick-masonry construction with exterior and façade details primarily constructed of wood and, on occasion, pressed tin metal ornamentation. Features did not include cupolas for the most part, and not all post offices of this period had murals. For example, while the PWA-built United States Post Office in Easton, Maryland did have a cupola, but was more normative in its construction. This particular building was of brick-clad and did not have the embellishments of stone work featured at Bethesda. However, one feature indicative of most post offices in small towns during the period is that they were built to be freestanding rather than attached. This was true of Bethesda's post office at the time it was constructed. While the Bethesda Post Office was designed under the direction of Louis A. Simon, it is not an important example of his career as the Supervising Architect of the Public Buildings Branch at the Treasury Department. However, the building does embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction and possesses high artistic values on a local level. Therefore the Bethesda Post Office does possess historic significance under NRHP Criterion C.

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Evaluation Under Criterion D: While the Bethesda Post Office was designed under the direction of Public Buildings Service and the Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon, it is not a source of important information regarding architectural design or construction techniques. The Bethesda Post Office is not likely to yield information important to history and/or prehistory. Therefore the building is not eligible for listing in the NRHP under Criterion D.

The Bethesda Post Office was also evaluated in its built context to determine if a historic district was present, but the building was found to be isolated as the majority of its surrounding buildings were constructed in the late 20th century and are significantly different in size, scale, and style.

Integrity

NRHP Bulletin 15, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey its significance. This guidance indicates that an evaluation of the seven aspects of integrity – location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association – must always be grounded in a thorough understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance (U.S. Dept. of the Interior 1990). Analysis of changes to the Bethesda Post Office since its construction within the framework of the seven aspects of integrity reveals that the building does not retain integrity sufficient to convey its historic significance under NRHP Criterion C.

- The Bethesda Post Office remains where it was originally constructed; it therefore retains integrity of *location*.
- The Bethesda Post Office continues to function as a post office, as retains integrity of *association*.
- The Bethesda Post Office was designed to suit the needs of a small town that was in the process of suburbanizing. Even after decades of suburbanization, Bethesda retained a small town feel. Since then, in the latter part of the 20th century, the majority of the small scale buildings fronting Wisconsin Avenue have been demolished to make way for buildings that are flush with the height of the United States Capital Building just a few miles away in Washington D.C. The Bethesda Post Office, once next door to an early 20th-century movie theatre, is now the dwarfed neighbor of large office buildings and complexes substantially out of scale with the older edifice. Originally, the Colonial Revival-style building was set within a yard and surrounded by grass, typical of

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public buildings within a small town context. The building is now set among high-rise buildings, surrounded by concrete, and no longer reads as an architectural gem within a grassy lot. As the proud presence of the Federal government on the local level, a symbol of a nation rebuilding itself after the depression, the connection with the larger world outside of town, a small town post office has a centralizing social, civic and commercial presence in these communities. The setting of the Bethesda Post Office is so dominated by a modern, large-scale built environment that is the antithesis of a small town that the building's historic association has been compromised. These changes to the built environment have compromised integrity of *setting and feeling*.

- The Bethesda Post Office had undergone many reconfigurations over time including the 1966 addition, an extension to the north elevation of the building that has not only demolished the original loading dock and removed the associated exterior stone wall and its fenestration of nine original windows, but also extended the primary elevation along Wisconsin Avenue compromising the symmetrical design and unified aesthetic of the building. The exterior of the Bethesda Post Office has been changed over time, including the 1966 addition, a large extension that is not in keeping with the style and form of the building. The 1966 addition, which increased the building's size by 70%, led to the loss of the entire north wall of the main block, which would have been highly visible from the Wisconsin Avenue and its associated sidewalk. The current stucco clad, nondescript north elevation of the 1966 addition reads as a former end, corner building once part of a row rather than as the completely detached, freestanding entity it was conceived to be. The original north elevation featured nine apertures, six of which were six-over-six light arched wood windows consistent with the Colonial Revival style and providing light to the building's interior workspaces and. This elevation was removed with the 1966 addition. The original loading dock was demolished to extend the parking lot/driveway towards the current loading dock. As built, the exterior was unified visually by irregular coursed rough-faced stone. Unlike a row building that is clad often times of an ornamented facade, brick party walls on the sides and a completely different, often lesser, material at the rear, the Bethesda Post Office originally was built as a fully articulated building with a continuous and consistent exterior aesthetic. This concept has been lost with the choice to demolish not only the rear ell, but most importantly the entire north elevation. The 1966 addition is visible from each elevation, from each

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vantage point—interrupting original materials at each angle. Also, as a part of the 1966 addition's appearance in each elevation, there is a loss in the consistency of workmanship—again, visible from each vantage point.

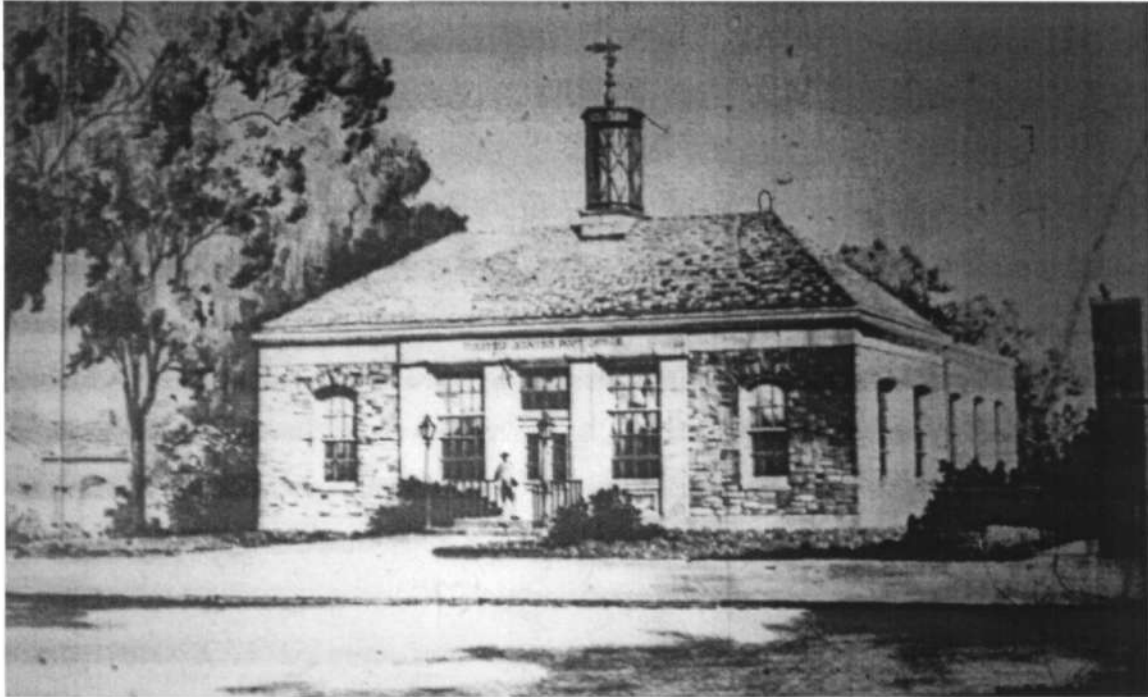
The interior of the building consists of two sections—the public lobbies and workspace. The interior of the Bethesda Post Office has been redesigned on a major scale at least twice since its original construction to serve growing postal operations resulting in a renovated and reconfigured interior plan using contemporary materials and finishes, often unsympathetic to the original design, which has substantially altered the original form, plan, space, and structure. While the floor and certain wall finishes remain, the majority of the building's interior materials including the original postal screen. Also the postmaster's office would have been located in the southeast corner of the building and its entrance would have been within the lobby, flanked by bulletin boards for post office notices and advertisements. The mural was above this fenestration. There was a small counter supported by stylized columns. This entire wall was demolished, opening the former postmaster's space for use as part of the public lobby. The mural was relocated. The postmaster's office replaced the swing room (break room) in the first floor workspace. Within the workspace of both the main and basement levels, the materials are a random mixture of old and new. Understanding the original layout without plans is even more confusing with the inconsistent and incomplete range of old and new. These changes, in addition to the aforementioned interior renovations, have removed or modified integral architectural features of the Bethesda Post Office. The most significant original interior public space, the main lobby--a focal point of post office design--has been completely reconfigured. The space would have included the postmaster's office and the public lobby with lock boxes along the primary façade. The retail lobby now runs along the original façade of the main block with the lock boxes within the 1966 addition and the postmaster's office in the rear of the building within the postal workspace. Originally located above the door of the postmaster's office, the mural has been removed, relocated offsite for many years, and returned to the lobby as a framed painting in a new location. Therefore, the building has therefore lost integrity of *design, materials and workmanship*, aspects of integrity essential to conveying historic significance under NRHP Criterion C.

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Photographs Illustrative of the Historic Context



Preliminary Study of the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda by Supervising Architect, Procurement Division, Treasury Department (1937) (NARA 2010)

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South and East Elevations of the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1938) (U.S. Treasury 1938)



East and North Elevations of the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1938) (U.S. Treasury 1938)

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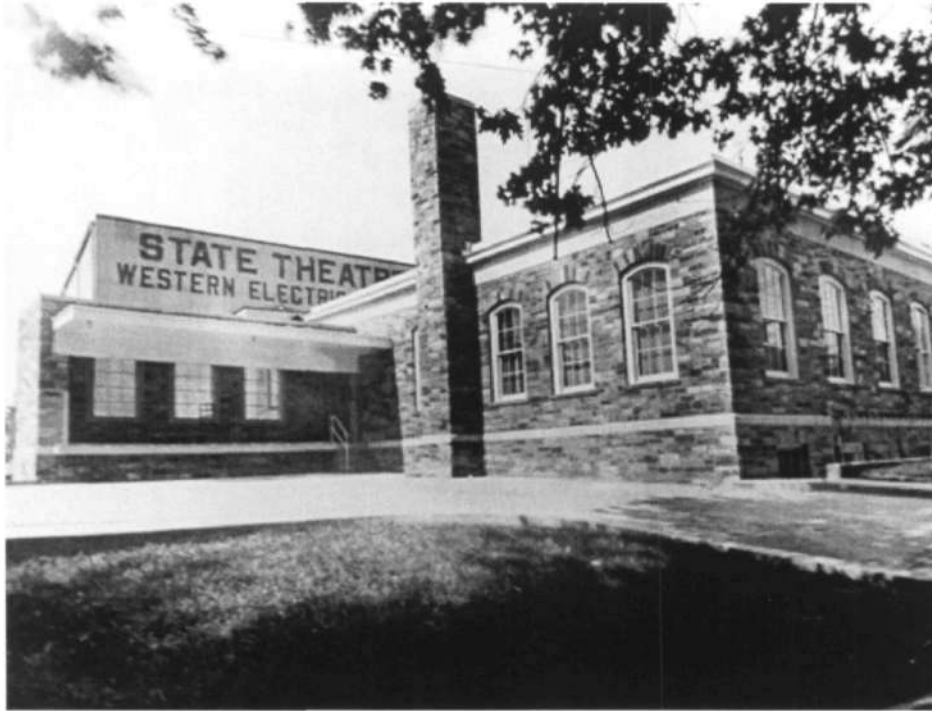


Main Entrance with the East Elevation of the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1938) (U.S. Treasury 1938)

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South and East Elevations of the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1938) (U.S. Treasury 1938)



Historic Context of Built Environment of the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (on left) and the State Theatre (on right) (Circa 1965) (Montgomery 2010)

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Robert Gates with the Original Competition Design for Mural for the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1939)
(Gates Papers)

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Original Lobby Elevation with Mural and Postmaster's Door,
U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1939) (Holtz 1939)

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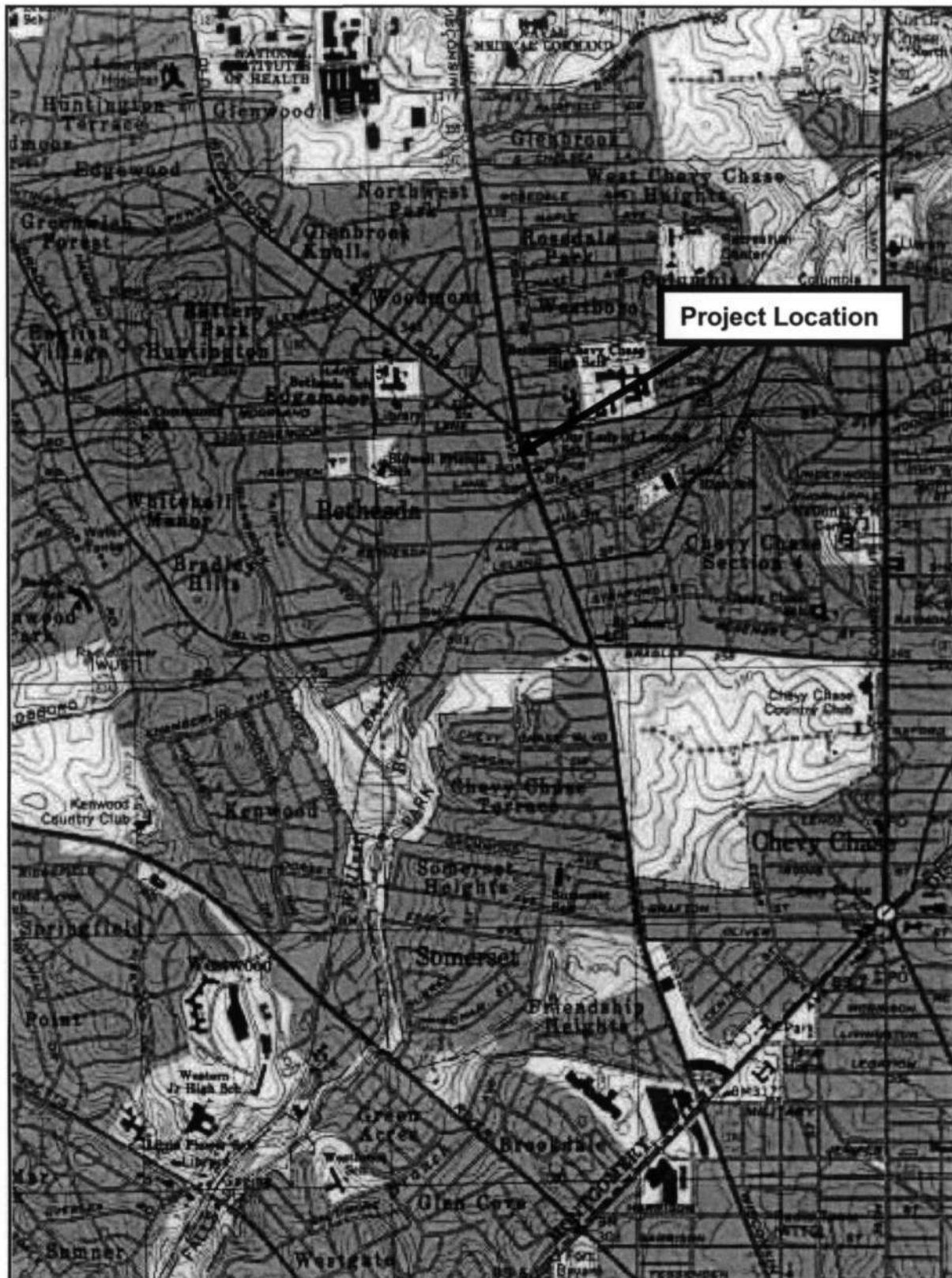


Robert Gates; Edward Bruce, head of the Fine Arts Division of the Treasury Procurement Division; Admiral C.J. Peoples, Supply Corps, U.S.N.; and Linwood Hill, superintendent of the post office, under the mural in the U.S. Post Office at Bethesda (1939) (Evening Star 1939)

Prepared by: Oscar Beisert

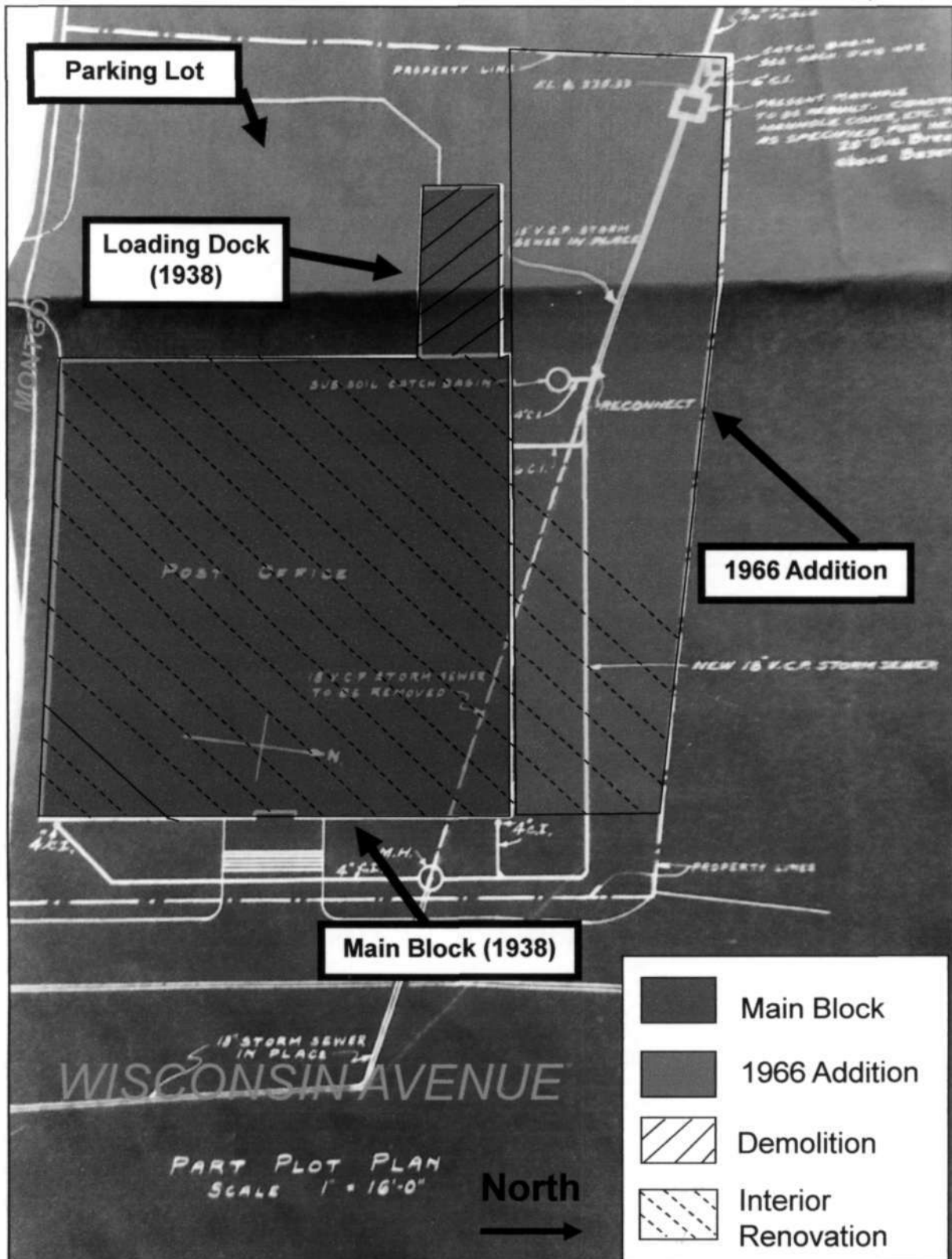
Date Prepared: December 3, 2010

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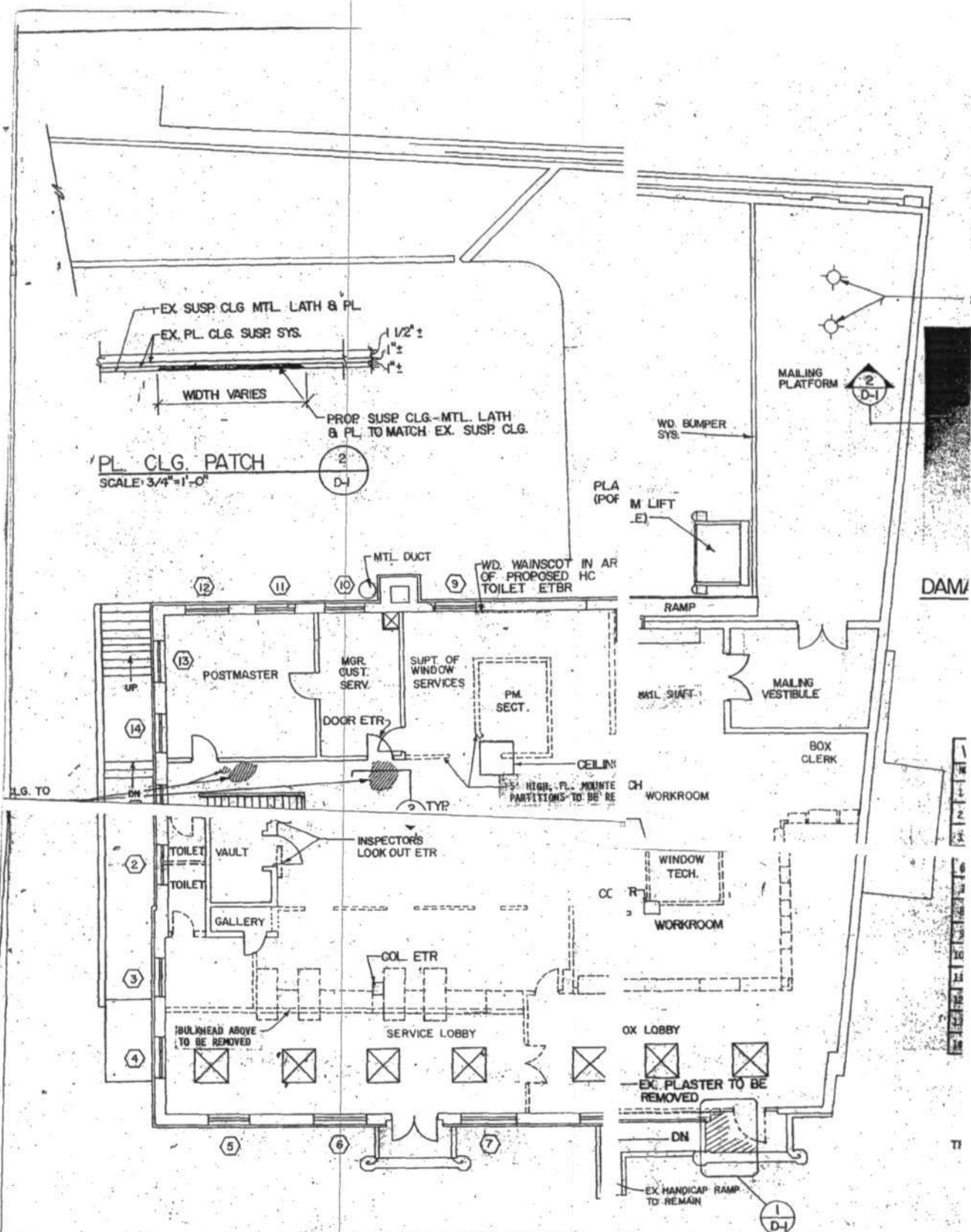


PROJECT Bethesda Post Office DOE	USGS Quad Map: Project Location	
SCALE n/a	URS	Project No. 15705211
SOURCE USGS		Attachment 2

M:35-14-05



PROJECT	Bethesda Post Office DOE	General Site and Building Evolution Map	
SCALE	n/a	URS	Project No. 15705211
SOURCE	Treasury Department		Attachment 2



FIRST FLOOR DEMOLITION PL
SCALE = 1/8" = 1'-0"

REVISIONS				
NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	DATE	APPROVAL	UNITS

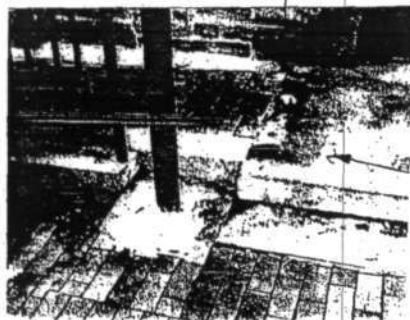
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
FACILITIES SERVICE OFFICE
P.O. BOX 701
COLUMBIA, MARYLAND 21045-0701

PROJECT TITLE & LOCATION
BUILDING RENOVATION
MAIN POST OFFICE
BETHESDA, MD. 20814

DRAWING TITLE
DEM

SCALE
AS SH
DATE
AUG. 19

M. 35-14-05

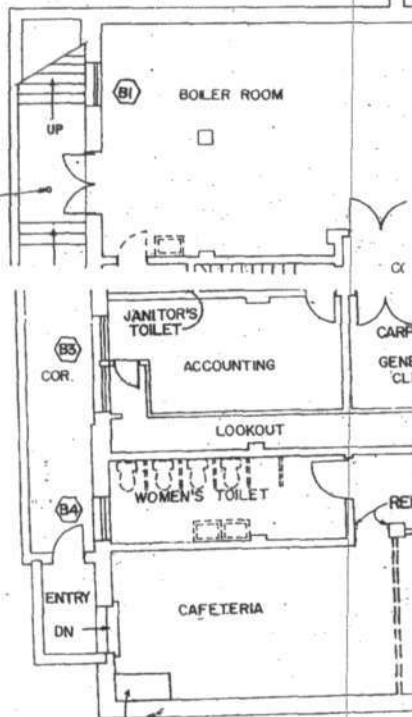


DAMAGED STOOP

PATCH AREA/
LEVEL CHA

STAINED STONE TO
BE CLEANED

DRAIN ETR



EX. GAS METER
TO REMAIN

CREATING/TRAINING

SUPT.

BOOKKEEPING/
FILES

STORAGE

EX. ELEC. METER
TO BE RELOCATED
SEE ELEC. DMGS.

EX. PLANTER

CATCH

BASEMENT DEMOLITION PLAN

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"Expansion Set for Post Office." 3 May 1965

"Mural Removed From Bethesda Post Office." September 1966.

Woltz, Lewis P. Photograph of Interior of Bethesda Post Office. Washington, D.C., 1939.

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Bethesda Post Office, Montgomery County, MD

Photo Log

All photographs were printed from digital image files in tiff format using Epson UltraChrome Pigmented Inks with on Epson Premium papers (Glossy, Semigloss, Luster and Semimatte). This process was used by L'Imagerie of Bethesda, Maryland to create archival quality hard copies of digital photographs. The CD is of the CD-R Gold standard using a Memorex(tm) CD-R (52X 700MB 80min).

Exterior Photographs

Photo Number/Elevation/Description

- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_01: East Elevation/Southeast Corner and Context of Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_02: East Elevation/Primary Facade and Context of Main Block and the 1966 Addition
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_03: East Elevation/Primary Elevation of Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_04: East Elevation/Former Entrance Fenestration of Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_05: East Elevation/Original Cornerstone of Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_06: South Elevation/ Fenestration at Street Level with English Basement of Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_07: South Elevation/English Basement and Decorative Railing of Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_08: West Elevation/Parking Lot, 1966 Addition and Main Block in Context
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_09: West Elevation/1966 Addition and Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_10: North Elevation/North Wall of 1966 Addition including Loading Dock/Rear Ell
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_11: North Elevation/Primary Façade, Statue and North Wall of 1966 Addition

Interior Photographs

Photo Number/Floor/Direction/Description

- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_12: Ground/Looking West/Public Box Lobby in 1966 Addition
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_13: Ground/Looking North/Reused Lock Boxes of Public Box Lobby in 1966 Addition
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_14: Ground/Looking South/Public Retail Lobby/Counters in Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_15: Ground/Looking North/Public Retail Lobby/Counters in Main Block
- M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_16: Ground/Looking West/Framed WPA Painting (Formerly Mural) above Public Lobby Retail Counter

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M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_17: Ground/Looking North/Workroom in Main Block and 1966
Addition from Hallway to Basement in Main Block

M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_18: Ground/Looking South/Stairway to Basement and
Bathroom in Main Block

M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_19: Ground/Looking West/Workroom and Loading Dock
Entrance in Main Block

M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_20: Basement/Looking North/Boiler Room in Main Block

M; 35-14-5_2010-11-01_21: Basement/Looking West/Parking Garage in 1966 Addition



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Bethesda Post office (Dary's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

East Elevation / Southeast Corner and Context of Main Block

1/21



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Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

East Elevation / Primary Facade and Context of Main Block
and the 1966 addition

2/21



HERALD COLLEGE
FOUNDED IN 1862
BY THE
SOCIETY OF
SCHOOL TEACHERS
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK
AND
THE
NEW YORK
EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

M:35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darry's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Belsert

2010-11-01

MD SHPD

East Elevation / Primary Elevation of Main Block

3/21



UNITED STATES
BETHESDA, MARYLAND

1914 2898

M:35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

East Elevation / Former Entrance Fenestration of Main Block

4/21

HENRY MORGENTHAU JR

SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

JAMES A FARLEY

POSTMASTER GENERAL

LOUIS A SIMON

SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

NEAL A MELICK

SUPERVISING ENGINEER

1937

M: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Reiser

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

East Elevation / Original Cornerstone of Main Block

5/21



W: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

South Elevation / Fenestration at Street level with English
Basement of Main Block

6/21



M:35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

South Elevation / English Basement and Decorative Railings
of Main Block

7/21



M: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

West Elevation / Parking Lot, 1966 Addition and Main Block
In Context

2/21



M: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Belser

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

West Elevation / 1966 Addition 2nd Main Block

9/21



M: 35 -14 -5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

North Elevation / North Wall of 1916 Addition including
Loading Dock / Rear Ell

10/21



M:35-14-5

Bethesda Post office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

North Elevation / Primary Façade, Statue and North Wall
of 1966 Addition

11/21



Professional
Typist
11/10/54

H: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

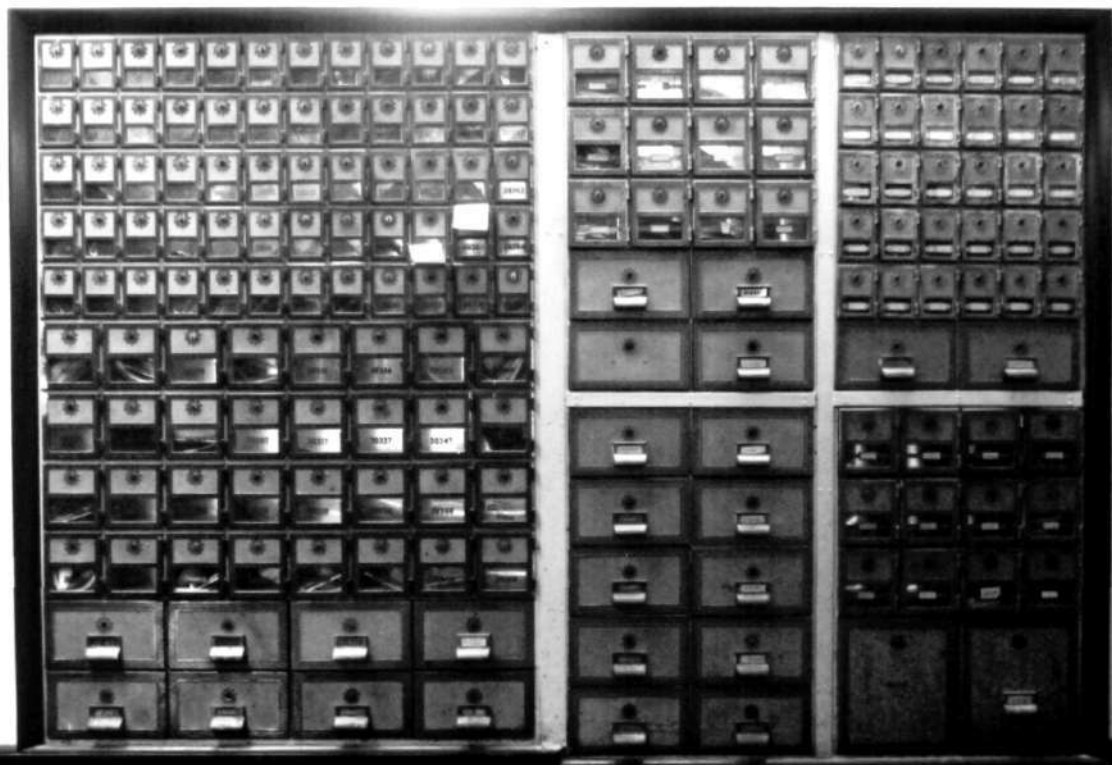
Oscar Belsont

2010-11-01

MD St+PO

Ground/Looking West / Public Box Lobby in 1966 Addition

12/21



M:35-14-5

Benedict Post Office (Darby's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisort

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking North / Reused Lock Boxes of Public Box
Lobby in 1966 Addition

13/21



M: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darryl's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Boisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking North / Public Retail Lobby / Counters in
Main Block

14/21



M: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking South / Public Retail Lobby / Courtners in
Main Block

15/21



ROBERT GATES - ARTIST
THIS MURAL WAS PRESERVED FOR THE
CITIZENS OF BETHESDA THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THE
MONTGOMERY FARM WOMAN'S COOPERATIVE MARKET INC.
1967

M: 85-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Boisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking West / Framed WPA Painting (Formerly
Mural) above Public Lobby Retail Counter

10/21



M: 35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking South / Workroom in Main Block and 1966
Addition from Hallway to Basement in Main Block

17/21



M:35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Boiser

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking North / Stairway to Basement and
Bathroom in Main Block

18/21



MI 35-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Peisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Ground / Looking West / Workroom and Loading Dock
Entrance in Main Block

19/21



M: 25-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beisert

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Basement / Looking North / Boiler Room in Main Block

20/21



M: 85-14-5

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)

Montgomery County, Maryland

Oscar Beiser

2010-11-01

MD SHPO

Basement / Locking West / Parking Garage in 1966 Addition

21 / 21

M: 35-14-05

1938

Bethesda Post Office (Darcy's Store)
7400 Wisconsin Avenue (MD 355)
Bethesda

The Bethesda Post Office is one of a number of buildings constructed in the business district during the late 1930s. Coming at the tail end of the depression and the beginning of a boom period in the development of the commercial district, it marks Bethesda's rise from the depression to prosperity. It was constructed in 1938 by the Sofarelli Brothers of Jamaica, New York. It was built in Neo-Georgian style of native stone. Four other structures in the district were also constructed of native stone prior to the post office, including the Bank of Bethesda (1926), the C&P Telephone Company Building (1928), and two shopping complexes (1928). Thus, the post office was constructed in compatibility with the existing structures. The post office does, however, exhibit a bit more detailing than these buildings. When completed it was said to be "one of the most up-to-date buildings of its kind in the National Capital's Suburbs," according to postal officials.

1. General Information

a. Name Bethesda, Maryland		b. Historic/Original Name Darcy's Store/Post Office
c. Site No. 13-0675/G01	d. Site Size (Sq. Ft.) 17,569	e. Site Size (Dimension) Irregular Shaped
f. Property Address 7400 Wisconsin Avenue Bethesda, MD 20814	g. Building Size (Sq. Ft.) 12,128	h. Building Size (Dimensions) 64'0" x 60'8"
i. Is Building Open to Public? Yes - Public Lobby		
j. Address of Office with Building Records (name and address of field office, region, etc. with official file.) Field Real Estate and Buildings Office P.O. Box 701, Columbia, MD 21045		k. Original Use Mercantile Establishment/U.S. Post Office
		l. Present Use U.S. Post Office

2. Property Appearance

a. Description of General Area (Describe neighborhood, historic district, land use & direct or indirect effect upon other building of historic interest. If more space is needed, attach additional sheets.) The Bethesda, Maryland Post Office is located within a commercial area and is not in an historic district.	b. General Condition of Property (Site and Building) At the time of original inspection in January 1983, the box lobby was in process of being expanded. The lobby area had been recently painted but the remainder of building needed painting badly. The vestibule ceiling and rear wall on mailing platform showed evidence of water seepage. Platform bumpers were missing. Very little employee parking and none for customers.
c. Description of Floorplan (Attach drawings if available.) First floor consists of public lobbies, Superintendent's office, rest rooms, mailing vestibule and mailing platform. (Original plan) Basement area consists of boiler, fuel, swing and storage rooms plus janitor's toilet and closet and carrier's toilet and unfinished and unexcavated areas. Copies of original plans are attached.	d. Description of Building Material (Roofs, walls, foundation, interior features, floor and ceiling, etc.) Roof - Slate with cupola and wood cornice Exterior - Stone and granite. Granite steps at front entrance. Interior Features: Walls - Plastered Floors - Lobby - Terrazo Workroom - Asphalt Plank Basement - Vinyl Asbestos Tile Ceiling - Suspended Foundation - Poured Concrete Public Lobby - Marble Wainscot Used
e. Description of unusual or unique subterranean features	

3. Architectural History

M:35-14-5

b. Date Constructed 1938	c. Date Restored/Renovated 1965	d. Date Moved to Present Site 1938
e. Original Owner (Name & Biographical Data) Federal Department U.S. Government		f. Original Builder (Name & Biographical Data) Unknown
g. Original Architect (Name & Biographical Data) Louis A. Simon Supervising Architect		h. Other Significant Participants (Names, relation to building, biographical data) Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of Treasury James A. Farley, Postmaster General Neal A. Melick, Supervising Engineer
i. Restoration Architect or Designer (if building has been restored/renovated) Burket, Tilghman, Nelson Associates, Architects		

4. Architectural Significance

Identify type, period, method of construction, artistic value, significant and distinguishable entity (See National Register criteria, 36 CFR 60.6, Criteria for Evaluation).

The building has no known architectural significance, other than exterior finish.

5. Historical Significance

Identify the broad patterns of American history (National, state or local level) or historic persons with whom the property is associated. (See National Register Criteria.)

Bethesda, in Hebrew Tongue meaning "House of Mercy" was named after the Bethesda Presbyterian Church which was built in 1820. Bethesda is an election district and not a town. As best as can be determined, the first Post Office took occupancy in a corner of Darcy's Store in 1862. Darcy's Store was a mercantile business owned by William Darcy. The Post Office's name was changed to Bethesda in 1871. Rural delivery was established in 1893 under the supervision of Judge Alfred Wilson. The Post Office lost its independence in the 1920's when it became a sub-station of Washington, DC. In 1981, the Post Office again became an independent Post Office.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Should this property be nominated to the National Register? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Give a brief statement to support your recommendation.

The building is neither historically nor architecturally significant. The architecture is typical of the period and is illustrative throughout the Eastern United States. As far as can be determined, there are no known historical persons or historical events associated with the building.

Prepared by Signature Thomas C. Kilpatrick	Final Recommendation by Signature Charles L. Fitzpatrick
Title Real Estate Officer	Title Manager, Real Estate
Date March 30, 1983	Date

M:35-14-5

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See correspondence dated October 1986

ACTION TAKEN

The purpose of this amendment is to designate the following sites, located within the Bethesda Central Business District, on the Master Plan.

M: 35/14-1	Montgomery County Farm Women's Cooperative
M: 35/14-2	Madonna of the Trails
M: 35/14-4	Bethesda Theater Complex
M: 35/14-5	Bethesda Post Office
M: 35/14-6	Wilson's Store & Post Office

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See correspondence dated August 23, 1985

ACTION TAKEN

PRELIMINARY DRAFT AMENDMENT TO
THE MASTER PLAN FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
BETHESDA CBD/MULTIPLE RESOURCE/
THEMATIC HISTORIC DISTRICT

THURSDAY, September 26, 1985

at

7:30 P.M.

in the

Montgomery Regional Office Auditorium
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland

The following resource which is also considered part of the district has already been designated on the Master Plan:

The Farm Women's Market #35/14-1
7155 Wisconsin Avenue (designated 9/79)

to take testimony on whether or not the following historic resource presently listed in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County should be included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Multiple Resource/Thematic Historic District #35/14 including:

1. Little Tavern #35/14-3
8100 Wisconsin Avenue
2. Bethesda Theater Complex #35/14-4
(Cinema 'n Draft House)
7715-7723 Wisconsin Avenue
3. Bethesda Post Office #35/14-5
7400 Wisconsin Avenue
4. Brooks Photographers #35/14-6
7349 Wisconsin Avenue
5. Community Paint & Hardware Store #35/14-7
7250 Wisconsin Avenue
6. Tudor Style Shopping Complex #35/14-8
7003-7029 Wisconsin Avenue
7. C&P Telephone Company Building #35/14-9
6925 Wisconsin Avenue

MIN
FE
BY

M:35-14-5

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See correspondence dated December 9, 1985

ACTION TAKEN

Final Draft Amendment.....to designate the following sites,
located within the Bethesda Central Business District, on the
Master Plan

M: 35/14-1	Montgomery County Farm Women's Cooperative
M: 35/14-2	Madonna of the Trails
M: 35/14-4	Bethesda Theater Complex
M: 35/14-5	Bethesda Post Office
M: 35/14-7	Wilson's Store & Post Office (Community Paint and Hardware)

m: 35-14/5

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

RECEIVED

MEMORANDUM

December 9, 1985

DEC 20 1985

MARYLAND HISTORICAL
TRUST

TO: Richard Ferrara, Director
Department of Housing and Community Development
John L. Menke, Director
Department of Environmental Protection
✓ J. Rodney Little, Director
State Historic Preservation Office
Priscilla Schwab, Chairperson
Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Melissa C. Banach, Coordinator MCB
Community Planning North

SUBJECT: Final Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for
Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Historic Sites

I am pleased to transmit to you this Final Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

This document contains the recommendation of the Montgomery County Planning Board on the designation of individual sites in the Bethesda CBD.

Should you have any questions concerning this amendment, please do not hesitate to contact Marty Reinhart at 495-4565.

MCB:MR:dws
Attachment

optional method, it may be appropriate to identify preservation of these additional resources as potential amenities to the project if demonstrated to be in the overall public interest.

<u>Site</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Associated Acreage</u>
35/14-5	Bethesda Post Office	7400 Wisconsin Avenue	13,211 sq.ft.

- Constructed in 1938 by the Sofarelli Brothers of Jamaica, New York, this single story, native stone building is neo-colonial in design and features a hipped roof with cupola and arched windows.
- One of a limited number of public buildings in the County constructed under the aegis of the Work Progress Administration (WPA). As a representative example of WPA construction, the building provides a physical link for the County with this important program and period in American history.
- This amendment recognizes that the Post Office, because of its scale, prominent location, and distinctive building material, has emerged as a landmark along Wisconsin Avenue. The site's importance as a public space will be further enhanced with the return of the Bethesda Madonna of the Trails. This amendment therefore designates the site's entire 13,211 sq. ft. parcel as the environmental setting.

<u>Site</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Associated Acreage</u>
35/14-7	Wilson's Store & Post Office (Community Paint and Hardware)	7250 Wisconsin Avenue	22,039 sq.ft.

- Circa 1890--Two-story, stucco over clapboard, frame commercial structure with one-story glass enclosed, shed-roofed porch and street-oriented flat facade featuring bracketed, decorative cornice.
- Architecturally the epitome of the turn-of-the-century village store, Wilson's Store and Post Office, known today as Community Paint and Hardware is believed to be the first commercial structure in the CBD and the only remaining vestige of Bethesda 19th century commercial beginnings.

M: 35-14/5

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

8787 Georgia Avenue • Silver Spring, Maryland 20907

(301) 495-4565

RECEIVED

August 23, 1985

AUG 27 1985

MARYLAND HISTORICAL
TRUST

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties

FROM: Montgomery County Planning Board Staff

SUBJECT: Historic District Public Hearing

Attached is a notice of public hearing on the nomination of a historic district in your area which may be of interest to you. The notice provides the date, time, and location of the public hearing and also provides instructions on how to submit testimony for the record. Should you have any additional questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Marty Reinhart at 495-4565.

MR:ms
Attachment

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to Article 28 of the Annotated Code of Maryland and Chapter 24A and Chapter 33A of the Montgomery County Code, the Montgomery County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission hereby gives notice that it will hold a public hearing on the following:

PRELIMINARY DRAFT AMENDMENT TO

THE MASTER PLAN FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION
BETHESDA CBD/MULTIPLE RESOURCE/
THEMATIC HISTORIC DISTRICT

THURSDAY, September 26, 1985

at

7:30 P.M.

in the

Montgomery Regional Office Auditorium
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland

to take testimony on whether or not the following historic resource presently listed in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County should be included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Bethesda CBD Multiple Resource/Thematic Historic District #35/14 including:

1. Little Tavern #35/14-3
8100 Wisconsin Avenue
2. Bethesda Theater Complex #35/14-4
(Cinema 'n Draft House)
7715-7723 Wisconsin Avenue
3. Bethesda Post Office #35/14-5
7400 Wisconsin Avenue
4. Brooks Photographers #35/14-6
7349 Wisconsin Avenue
5. Community Paint & Hardware Store #35/14-7
7250 Wisconsin Avenue
6. Tudor Style Shopping Complex #35/14-8
7003-7029 Wisconsin Avenue
7. C&P Telephone Company Building #35/14-9
6925 Wisconsin Avenue

The following resource which is also considered part of the district has already been designated on the Master Plan:

The Farm Women's Market #35/14-1
7155 Wisconsin Avenue (designated 9/79)

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed the architectural and historic significance of the Bethesda CBD according to criteria listed in the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

The Preservation Commission recommends that the properties listed above be designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation as a "multiple resource/thematic" historic district with the individual buildings to be protected under the Historic Preservation Ordinance which provides certain controls regarding alteration, demolition, and maintenance of the property.

If not included in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, these individual properties and the district, as currently delineated in the Locational Atlas, would no longer be subject to the provision of Chapter 24A-10, the Moratorium on Alteration and Demolition. The district will, however, remain on the Maryland Historical Trust's Inventory.

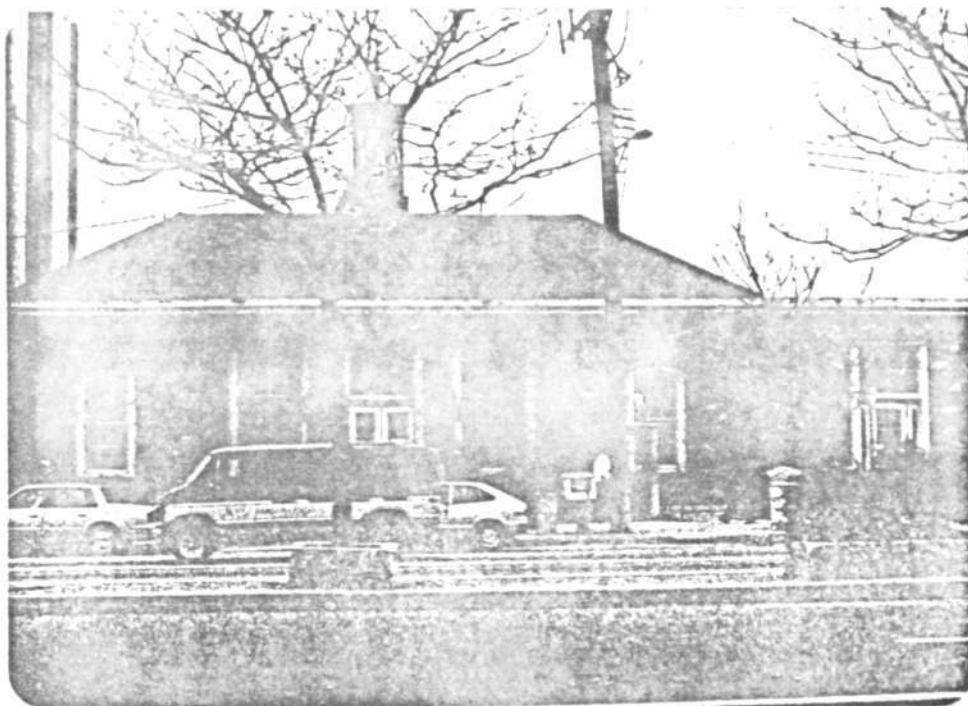
The Preliminary Draft Amendment is available for public inspection at The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Regional Headquarters, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The purpose of the public hearing is to allow all interested persons to express their views concerning this action. Persons wishing to testify should call 495-4600. If you are unable to attend, write your concerns to the Montgomery County Planning Board at 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20907 and they will be made part of the public hearing record.

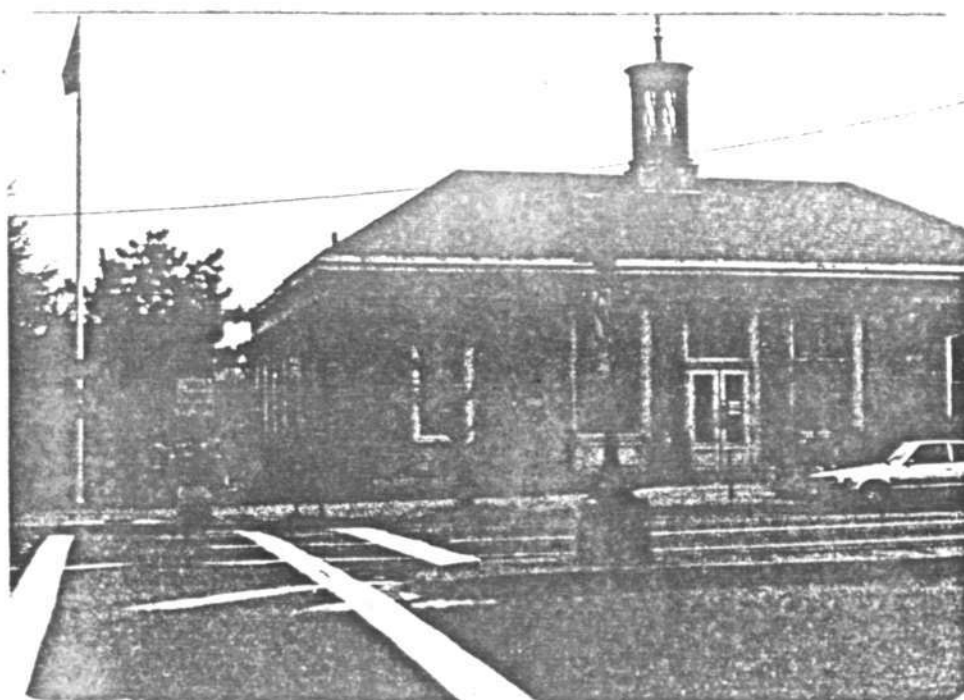
Thomas H. Countee, Jr.
Thomas H. Countee, Jr.
Executive Director

THC:MR:ms

M:35-14-5

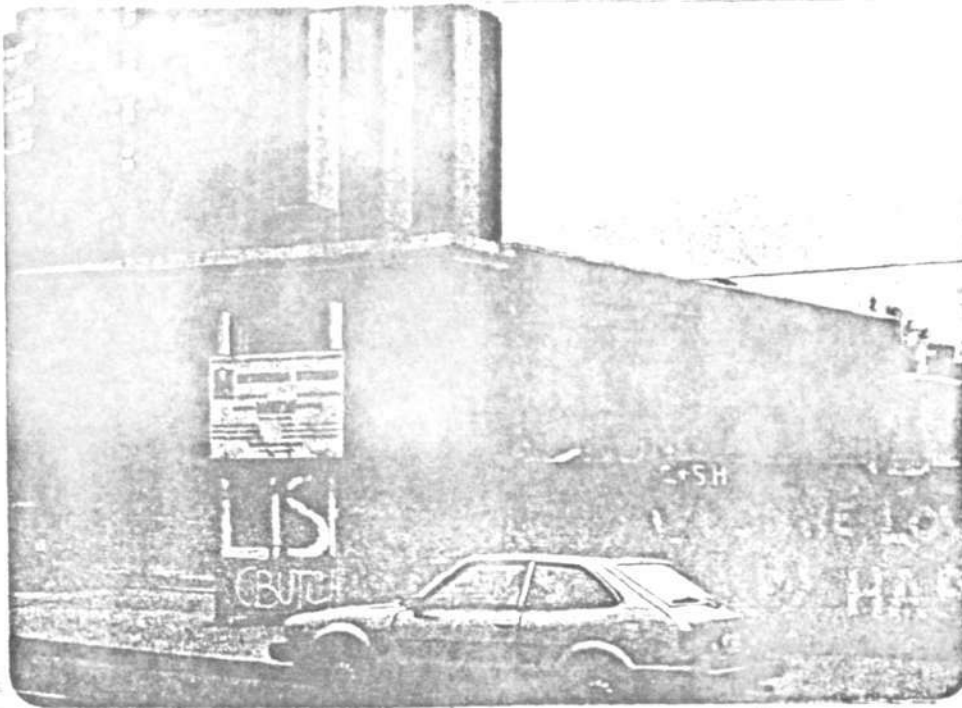


Attach Photo Showing Front View



Attach Photo Showing Street View to the Right

M: 35-14-5



Attach Photo Showing Street View to the Left

Attach additional photographs of other significant features here. Use a separate sheet if necessary.